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ABSTRACT

The administration and funding of early childhood education programs has engendered recent federal policy debates. This volume is the third report in a series of three, which are derived from a study that examined how local organizations implement complex government programs for early childhood education. The study analyzed and documented significant local examples of innovative and successful reforms in early childhood services, including Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child-care agencies. This volume describes the study's research design and methods, including the strategy for site selection and copies of interview guides used in the field work. The study focused on local examples of early childhood and family-support programs that were comprehensive, family-focused, sustained, and intensive. It included three different types of program strategies--parent-education programs, early child-care settings, and community-based partnerships. The research focused on program design, implementation, and impact, and looked at ways in which local, internal, and external forces shaped program development. All projects served children whose ages ranged from birth to 5 years and who came from families of low to moderate incomes. The projects involved sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs and included a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members. Researchers conducted interviews with focus groups (administrators, parents, and staff) and with program directors. Attachments include a program-nomination form, copies of interview guides, and types of information coded for Ethnograph software. Two tables are included. (Contains seven references.) (LMI)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD REFORM IN SEVEN COMMUNITIES:

FRONT-LINE PRACTICE, AGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

Volume III

Technical Appendix: Research Design and Methodology

By

Elena Lopez, Harvard Family Research Project

June 30, 1995

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PREFACE

The Studies of Education Reform project was initiated by the Office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, to examine the implementation and effects of twelve significant education reform strategies, including student assessment, parent community involvement, uses of technology, and early childhood services. Twelve research projects were funded to analyze local examples of successful implementation of reforms, to inform practitioner and policy audiences. This research on early childhood reforms was conducted by the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Harvard Family Research Project.

The project design involved analysis of past research and recent policy trends and the preparation of seven case studies of local early childhood initiatives. To reflect the diversity of providers of programs for young children and their families, case study sites included Head Start grantees, local school districts, and child care agencies. All projects serve children from low- to moderate-income, ages birth through age five; involve sponsorship by one or more state or federal programs; and include a significant component of outreach, involvement, and service to parents and other family members.

This report describes our research design and methods, including key research questions; our strategy and methods for selecting case study sites; data collection and data analysis methods. The volume also includes copies of nomination forms used to solicit potential case study sites, and interview guides used in our field work.

The project findings and analysis are conveyed in two additional volumes. Volume I - Technical Report contains an executive summary, a summary review of literature, the study aims and questions, summaries of the seven case study sites, the cross-site analysis, assessment of program outcomes, assessment of the resources required to implement early childhood reforms, and implications for policy, practice, and future research. Volume II - Case Studies contains seven narrative case studies, providing detailed description of the community context, service strategies, organizational and fiscal attributes, and outcomes of each initiative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study of how local organizations implement complex government programs was itself a complicated interorganizational initiative. The National Association of State Boards of Education, the Harvard Family Research Project, the U.S. Department of Education, Anne Mitchell (an independent consultant of early childhood policy issues), a panel of technical advisors, a set of authors of commissioned papers, and busy managers and staff members in seven local early childhood agencies all made substantial investments of resources and talents to this project.

The authors are grateful to our Project Officers, Bob Thomas and Carol Chelemer, and staff at the Office of Education Research and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education for conceptualizing and sponsoring this research, for their management acumen, and for substantive advice on our plans, methods, reports, and products.

We are also grateful to members of our Advisory Group, Charles Bruner, Lois Engstrom, Sarah Greene, Norton Grubb, Jim Hamilton, Vonnie McLoyd, Roger Neugebauer, Sheila Smith, and Brenda Turnbull who provided valuable advice on the research design, site selection strategy, and the evolving context of early childhood policy and practice.

The study could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of our seven case study sites. Directors, staff members, parents, and children were unfailingly gracious in working with us during our interviewing, focus groups, and observation of classrooms, meetings, home visits, and other project activities. Thanks to Ethel Seiderman and the late Barbara Shaw of the Parent Services Project; Jo Ann Williams at Child Development, Inc.; Diane "Rocky" Rocketenetz and Rick Hulefeld in Covington, Kentucky; Pat Noonan and Pat Bryant in Jersey City, New Jersey; Chris Carman at Inn Circle in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Elaine Draeger at Sheltering Arms, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia; and Susan Neddeau, Colleen Alivado, and Patsy Jones of the FACE Program.

Heather Weiss, Director of the Harvard Family Research Project helped to conceptualize the research design, provided strategic guidance on the worlds of public policy and family support initiatives, and contributed in many ways to the shape and quality of our final products. Other members of the Harvard Family Research Project staff also contributed research and editorial support, in particular Tamara Beauboeuf, Crystal Byndloss, Margaret Dowley, Arlie Woodrum, and Kate Wrean.

A number of people at the National Association of State Boards of Education were of assistance over the course of this project, including Gene Wilhoit and Brenda Welburn, Executive Directors; Virginia Roach, Deputy Director; David Kysilko, Director of Publications; Adele Robinson, Director of Governmental Affairs; and Joan Waters and Nancy Deoudes, Support Staff.

Anne Mitchell of Early Childhood Policy Research, Inc. was a member of our original project team, and provided valuable input to the overall conceptualization of the research, to site selection and research methods, and to our overall strategy for dissemination over the course of the project.

Helpful comments on earlier versions of this report were received from Gina Adams, Stacie Goffin, Sheila Smith, Barbara Willer, Heather Weiss, and Anne Mitchell.

I. RESEARCH DESIGN

The Early Childhood Policy Study applied the case study methodology (Yin, 1984) to the study of seven early childhood programs. The programs represent a diversity of policy initiatives, sponsorship, community setting, and scale. This section of the report describes the design and methodology of the study and the processes that guided the presentation of our final reports.

Based on an initial analysis of policy trends and current research we chose to focus our research on local examples of early childhood and family support programs which were:

- **Comprehensive**, defined as including early care and education, health services, parenting education, and linkages to other social and family services.

- **Family-focused**, addressing services and supports to both children and parents, and

- **Sustained and intensive**, supporting continued participation for more than one year.

The RFP issued by the Office of Education Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, provided guidance towards inclusion of three different types of program strategies:

- Parent education programs, which support parents of young children with information, social support, and linkages to other services, through combinations of home visits, group meetings, and formal classes.

- Early child care settings which provide educational and social experiences for young children in families where parents work outside the home.

- Community-based partnerships which bring together agencies providing health care, preschool and child care, parent education and support, social services, family literacy, and employment training to provide more convenient, sustained support.

This directive provided an unusual opportunity to look across several program strategies and professional communities. Most past evaluation and policy studies in the early childhood field have been limited to description of only one of these strategies. Instead, the design of our case study research examined a range of agency sponsors providing early childhood services including Head Start, child care centers and schools. The choice reflects the realities of the early childhood arena, where there are multiple policy streams and multiple providers in communities.

Because early childhood policies and programs have different sources of sponsorship, the research also sought to capture the diversity of programs. Innovative programs in early childhood are happening at the local, state and federal levels; and policy makers at each of these levels need information about designing, implementing and assessing initiatives that is pertinent to them. By selecting programs begun under different sponsorship we had the opportunity to examine the dynamics of federal-local and state-local implementation issues as well as instances where local entrepreneurial leaders capture multiple funding sources to support their vision of needed services.

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Our basic design gave priority on "best case" programs which either possess positive data about their effectiveness or which appear from our literature review on the characteristics of effective programs to have considerable promise. Based on the quantity of past research already revealed in our proposal preparation, we believe certain components/characteristics of more effective/promising strategies are a matter of consensus. As mentioned above we planned to focus our field work on new initiatives which exhibit tendencies towards more comprehensive, family-focused, intensive, and continuous services - or "second-generation" adaptations of older programs which are shifting towards these characteristics.

Figure 1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Case study research is appropriate to studies of an exploratory and explanatory nature. The research study sought to better understand the development, implementation, and impacts of early childhood initiatives. As an **exploratory study**, the key research questions in each area of early childhood program development were:

DESIGN: How do successful program directors work to get early childhood programs adopted and funded? What strategies are linked to higher quality services, more comprehensive and responsive operations, and greater ability to assist and support young children and their parents?

IMPLEMENTATION: What are the problems and problem-solving strategies found in each case situation? How does a program develop in practice over time?

IMPACT: How does the program keep track of outcomes and what results, if any, have been accomplished?

As an **explanatory study** the study sought to determine the ways local, internal, and external forces shape program development. This ecological approach framed our research questions thus:

How do community conditions (demographics, economics, community resources) encourage or hinder the development of comprehensive early childhood services?

How does program leadership impact the development and sustainability of an early childhood initiative?

How does the larger policy environment interact with program implementation?

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

Our goal was to obtain a broad and diverse pool of programs from which we could select seven programs for in-depth study. To this end, we developed and circulated **program nomination forms** to state boards of education, departments of education, the National Head Start Association, state administrators of child care services, leaders of national organizations concerned with early childhood programs and policy, and members of our advisory panel. (See Attachment 1). A total of 87 nomination forms were returned, providing us the names of programs in child care (16), education and special education (38), Head Start (20), and family support (13). Based on the information in these forms, follow-up phone calls with program directors, and review of documents they sent us, we chose seven programs.

Other criteria in the final selection included: representation of a range of program approaches and reform strategies within each of the three types of programs noted in the RFP; inclusion of both relatively new programs to examine start-up and early implementation issues as well as more mature programs to examine issues of institutionalization and maintenance; study of both targeted programs with limited eligibility and universal programs; and variation on demographic and community variables, such as urban/rural/suburban locations and different types of populations. The types of program sponsorship and characteristics along some of these dimensions are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected Site Criteria by Type of Program

Selected Criteria	Head Start	Child Care	School
Program Strategy			
Child care/education	1	2	2
Parent education			1
Community partnership	1		
Years in Operation			
Less than 5 yrs.	1		3
More than 5 yrs.	1	2	
Eligibility			
Universal		2	2
Targeted	2		1
Origin of Initiative			
Federal	2		1
State			2
Local		2	
Region			
West		1	
Midwest	1		
South	1	1	1
Southwest			1
East			1
Location			
Rural	1		1
Urban	1	2	2

Data Collection

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, data collection procedures involved triangulation or the use of multiple types of data and multiple observers (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Denzin, 1970; Webb et. al., 1966). Specifically, the research design included:

- Multiple observers at each site.

- Multiple types of evidence, including key informants interviews, annual reports, training manuals and other documents, on-site observation, and any available evaluation data.

- Interviews with multiple key informants at program sites (director, teachers, family support staff, parents, school officials, community agencies) to attain different perspectives on the program.

- Common interview schedules, observation guides, and field-note protocols to insure uniformity of data collection within and across sites (See Attachment 2).

- A meeting of program directors and research staff midway through the project to discuss themes emerging from the research.

Field preparation consisted of the following tasks:

- Sending a letter introducing study and seeking permission to conduct research; requesting relevant documents; clarifying understandings regarding confidentiality and opportunities to review and comment on the project's reports.

- Reviewing documents and any other information about the site to prepare interview schedules to get at site-specific issues.

- Identifying and arranging interviews with key informants and scheduling site visits.

Fieldwork was conducted by two- or three-person teams to gain the benefits of different perspectives on key events. We began our site visits by interviewing the program director and ended with a "debriefing," which consisted of getting feedback about our visit and sharing our preliminary impressions of the program with the director. During week long site visits, we interviewed key informants, conducted three separate focus groups with teachers, family support workers, and parents, observed classroom activities, parenting sessions, and home visits, and kept field notes of our observations and conversations. All interviews were tape recorded. The average length of an interview was one hour; for program directors, two hours. Table 2 provides an example of a site visit schedule.

The fieldwork data were enriched by a program directors meeting held midway during the project. The directors convened at the NASBE office in Alexandria, VA for a two-day meeting, to discuss cross-site issues such as the incentives and barriers to developing quality programs, collaboration, funding, program management, and the influence of federal and state policies on local implementation. These discussions were also tape recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The basic framework of design, implementation, and impact phases of program development was used to organize our data analysis and report writing. The procedures we followed to analyze our data consisted of the following steps:

- Developing case study data base containing interview and focus group transcripts, using 40 codes entered into Ethnograph software. (See Attachment 3.) Coders were trained and coded data sets reviewed by supervisors.

- Cross-team review of individual case studies.

- Review of individual case study draft by program director for accuracy of factual information and to obtain feedback.

- Continuous analysis of individual cases to determine cross-case themes; and

- Periodic team meetings in person and by conference calls to refine individual case analysis, develop outline of cross-case analysis, and share feedback.

- Review of cross-case draft by program directors and panel of experts.

The research and analysis process involved considerable overlap. As data were collected from the field site, they were coded and analyzed, and a case study was written. This allowed the team to identify issues and themes that could be pursued in the next sites to be visited. Data analysis was not left to the end of the research but was built throughout the research process. This is in accord with qualitative data analysis procedures as outlined in Patton (1980), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Miles and Huberman (1984).

Table 2. Sample Site Visit Schedule
Single-Site Visit By Three-Person Team

DAY 1	
9:00	Tour of Building and Grounds
	Interview Program Director
10:30 - 11:30	Interview Superintendent
1:00 - 2:00	Interview Chapter 1 and Special Education Directors
2:00 - 3:00	Observe classrooms
3:00 - 4:30	Tour schools and neighborhoods
6:30 - 8:00	Attend parenting session
DAY 2	
9:00	Interview Head Start director
	Observe parent training session
11:00 - 12:00	Interview educational technology consultant
1:00 - 2:00	Home visit
2:00 - 4:00	Observe classrooms
DAY 3	
9:00 - 11:00	Focus Group with Family Advocates
	Interview Child Care Center Director
2:00 - 3:00	Focus Group with Parents
3:00 - 4:00	Interview Education Coordinator
4:00 - 5:00	Observe registration
DAY 4	
8:30 - 9:30	Visit elementary-school based early childhood program
10:00 - 11:00	Interview evaluators of early childhood center
	Observe classrooms
	Interview Chapter 1 parent coordinator
1:30 - 2:30	Focus Group with Community Health Partners
3:00 - 4:00	Focus Group with Community Social Service Partners
DAY 5	
8:30 - 9:30	Attend staff meeting
9:30 - 11:00	Focus Group with Teachers
11:00 -11:30	Debriefing with Program Director

Report writing

Report writing involved a research member taking responsibility for analyzing the material collected from a site and writing a case study. In order to achieve a high degree of consistency in the reports, the team members developed a common outline. Each case contained the following elements:

- The points of distinction of a specific program.
- Program context, including the origin and design of the initiative.
- Services for children and for adults.
- Efforts to provide comprehensive services through collaboration.
- Data on program outcomes.
- Organizational features: staffing, funding, evaluation.

After an initial draft had been written, it was circulated among team members and revised to incorporate their comments. The new version was then sent to a program director for review and feedback.

Preparation of analytic, cross-case products reflected an iterative process. As we prepared the individual case studies, we took advantage of a variety of opportunities to present papers and panel presentations at a variety of conferences, including events oriented to the research community, to state and federal policy audiences, and to early childhood professionals. (In many instances we invited representatives of several case study sites to participate as presenters or reactors). Each presentation provided opportunities to explore tentative themes and implications from our field work. The program directors meeting was another significant opportunity to validate some of our initial analytic themes and implications, to deepen our understanding of their complexity, and also to suggest new themes that we tried to examine in the next field visits. This process eventually crystallized the set of issues that we describe in the final technical research report (Volume I).

As we started making presentations and writing articles for publication, it also became clear that we had a variety of audiences for our final reports. Accordingly, the interests of practitioners are covered in analysis of strategies and challenges of teaching and serving young children, and supporting and involving families. The interests of program managers are addressed in analysis of issues of funding, staffing and training, and delivering quality services. Finally, the concerns of policy makers are examined in analysis of the effects of current state and federal programs on local agencies and services, and in analysis of the implications of our study for improvements in early childhood policy development.

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Attachment 1

The National Early Childhood Policy Study - Program Nomination Form

The National Association of State Boards of Education and the Harvard Family Research Project are engaged in a national research project on early childhood policy and practice. The study is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. We are seeking your help in identifying sites for eight case studies of innovative, high quality local initiatives serving families with young children. To be considered, an initiative **must** have the following characteristics:

- Serves families with children from birth (or prenatal) through five years.
- Offers substantial services both to young children and to their families.
- Offers comprehensive services including health, education, child care, parent support and social services.
- Offers sustained, continuous services to families for at least two years of the young child's life.

We are seeking **diversity and variation** on other characteristics in the initiatives we choose to study:

- We want to study comprehensive initiatives which evolve from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, such as an early education and child development orientation; a parent education and family support base; or a focus on family well-being and economic self-sufficiency, combining quality child development services with adult education, literacy development and employment training.

- Child and family services exist in many kinds of sponsoring agencies and can be supported with funds from many sources. We are interested in initiatives in public schools, Head Start or child care centers, public housing agencies, health or welfare agencies, family support or special education programs, and organizations serving teen parents.

- Programs that serve families of different income levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, language groups and parental ages are of interest. We are also seeking programs which serve different sizes and types of communities in different regions of the country.

We are especially interested in initiatives that are moving beyond providing quality services in a single site to replication/system change endeavors, including community-wide efforts to offer comprehensive, family-focused services.

To nominate initiatives for consideration as case study sites, please fill out the form on the next pages and send it to Tom Schultz at the NASBE address above. We would appreciate receiving all nominations by **August 20th, 1992.** If you have questions, please call Tom at (703) 684-4000.

The National Early Childhood Policy Study
Program Nomination Form

Name of person nominating: _____

Your address: _____

City/state/zip: _____

Telephone/area code: _____

Check: __ if you would like to know about the progress of this study and publications we produce.

Information about the program you are nominating:

Program name: _____

Address: _____

City/state/zip: _____

Telephone with area code: _____

Program contact person: _____

1. How many families/children does the program serve? _____

2. What age range of young children does the program serve? _____

3. What is the ethnic/racial and language background of the families the program serves?

_____

4. What is the range of family incomes of participants in the program?

_____

5. What is the approximate total population of the community the program is located in? Is the community urban, suburban, or rural?

_____

6. What are the core services offered to children?

_____

7. What are the core services offered to adults?

_____

8. What other services are available to children and families in this program?

_____

9. For how long is the typical family involved in the program?

_____

10. How long has the program existed?

_____

11. How is it funded?

_____

12. How is the program involved in the community?

_____

13. Why should this program be chosen as a case study? What is special about this program?

_____

_____

_____

Please send nomination forms to Tom Schultz at NASBE, 1012 Cameron St., Alexandria, VA. 22314, **by August 20th, 1992** or call 703-684-4000 if you have questions about this project.

ATTACHMENT 2

INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP GUIDES

PROGRAM DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR INTERVIEW

A. School District/Community Characteristics

1. I'd like to begin by asking you about the characteristics of the school district/community and how they have influenced the design of your program. What demographic, economic, political and social characteristics of the district/community have shaped the design of your program?

B. Philosophy and Goals

1. In your own words, what are the goals of your program? What are you trying to achieve?

2. What (or who) has influenced the basic philosophy and goals of your services most?

C. History

1. Will you tell us how the family support and education program got started, how you first got involved with it and what your current role is.

2. Looking back, can you identify stages or turning points in your thinking about family support and education.

3. What would you say was the single most important factor in the growth and viability of your program?

4. Would you tell us about the initial stage of the program? What were some of the main problems that you encountered?

5. Who were your supporters? (groups or individuals) Who were your opponents?

6. Can you give us an example of any major setbacks in your planning and growth periods? i.e. darkest moments

7. Would you be able to describe how you were able to turn one of these setbacks/problems into an opportunity?

8. What changes in the design and operations have been made?

D. Service System

1. What resources or services to support children and families are lacking or unavailable in this community?

   1.1 What obstacles to services exist for children and families?

   1.2 What is the _____doing to overcome these obstacles?

2. What kinds of outcomes would you like to see for families enrolled in your early childhood and family support programs?

3. How does your program go about ensuring that it is responsive to the characteristics, needs and desires of:

   - Program participants
   - School
   - Community in general?

   CHECK OFF:

   Needs assessment (how conducted)
   Program record keeping
   Other forms of data collection (specify)
   Staff meetings
   Parents represented in advisory boards
   Representation in boards of other agencies
   Meetings with other agencies
   Meetings with school officials

4. What are the major concerns of families about the operation of _____? How are these concerns being addressed?

E. Organization

1. Can you describe the different positions in your organization?

2. What are the ways that make it easy to plan and work together?

3. What makes it difficult to work together?

5. What criteria do you have for hiring staff?

6. How are staff involved in decision making? planning?

7. What are the major concerns of the staff about the operation of ____? How are these concerns being addressed?

8. What pre-service and in-service training do you provide the staff?

9. What areas need to be strengthened in terms of staff training?

F. Relationship to Community Agencies

1. At the planning stages of your programs, who or what community agencies were involved?

2. How did you ensure coordination of services? (Formal agreements)?

3. What kinds of communication linkages do you keep with your peers from other agencies?

Formal Meetings (how often)
Informal meetings
Telephone contact
Memos
Other (specify)

4. Now, I'd like to ask you about arrangements you make with other agencies to provide family support and education services. Please tell me what arrangements exist and the reasons for the choices made.

4.1 Do you receive staff assistance from other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

4.2 Do you receive funds from other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

4.3 Do you share referrals with other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

4.4 Do you share information concerning families with other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

4.5 Do you share training and technical assistance with other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

4.6 Do you carry out any other programs or service with other agencies? Please describe the arrangements and why they were designed that way.

5. What are some of the things that make it difficult to work with other agencies? What are you doing to resolve these issues?

CHECK OFF:

Program philosophy or goals differ
Categorical funding
Lack of staff and resources
Lack of communication
Lack of clearly defined areas of responsibility
Inability to resolve conflict
Defense of areas of responsibility (turf)
Mismatched reporting cycles and requirements
Other (specify)

6. What are the most effective ways of dealing with conflict when it develops among partners to a family support and education program?

7. In your relationship with other agencies, what areas do you think need to be strengthened? How do you plan to do this?

8. How do you think Head Start expansion will affect your program?

G. Relationship to School

1. What are some of the benefits of working in a school-based program?

2. What are some of the challenges of working in a school-based program?

3. What arrangements exist for transition of children from preschool to kindergarten?

H. Funding

1. What sources of funding do you have?

2. What in-kind contributions do you receive?

3. What strategies are you pursuing to ensure continuous funding or support for your programs?

4. Over the years has it become easier or more difficult to find resources for your program?

5. What are the kinds of things funders want to see before they support your program?

I. General

1. What is the impact of the program on families? community?

2. What are the main constraints that have limited the program's development?

3. What recommendations do you have for improving the program?

COMMUNITY AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS

Name _____ Organization_____

The Community

1. Can you describe what _____ as a community is doing to provide comprehensive and coordinated services for children and families?

2. What resources or services to support children and families are lacking or unavailable in this community? What obstacles to services exist for children and families?

3. What outcomes would you like to see for children and families?

The Agency

1. What is your role in your agency?

   1.1 What kinds of services do you provide in the community?

2. How, why and when did you and your agency first get involved with _____ program?

3. Did you or someone in your organization participate in the design of _____ program?

   3.1 What were the most important issues that had to be worked out during the design phase?

   3.2 In retrospect, would you have done anything differently? What?

   3.3 What changes have been made as the _____ is now being implemented?

4. Does your organization contribute financial resources to _____ program?

   What do these resources support?

5. Does your organization contribute staff support to _____program?

   5.1 What arrangements in terms of schedules, training, record keeping and supervision have been made?

   5.2 Have there been any problems with these arrangements?

6. What services does your organization provide _____program?

   6.1 Have there been any problems providing these services?

   6.2 Is there a formal agreement that covers these services? What does it specify?

6.3 Do you receive payment from _____ (program) for these services?

7. Does your organization do any types of training and technical assistance with _____?

8. Does your organization refer families to the services to _____?

9. Have you experienced any difficulties working with _____ program?

Have these issues been resolved?

What would be the best way to resolve such issues?

10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of _____program?

11. Is there anything that you want to add about your linkage and involvement with _____?

Community Collaboration

1. In policy circles there is a lot of interest in the concept of agency collaboration to provide services for children and families. How would you describe the working relationship of service providers --public and private-- in this community?

2. What are the barriers to collaboration?

What state/federal rules and regulations act as barriers to collaboration?

3. How can relationships among agencies be strengthened?

PARENT FOCUS GROUP

INTRODUCTION: We are holding this group discussion to gather information that will help us understand how schools and other agencies respond to community needs through programs like ___. Because you are eligible to participate in this program you are in the position to best describe what the program has accomplished for those who are in it, what are its problems, and how the program can be improved. This group meeting is to give you an opportunity to talk about your experience of the program. The information we gather will be useful to other states and cities that are establishing programs like this one.

During this hour we plan to cover the following topics:

Getting to Participate in the Program
Program Services
Relationships between the Program and Families
Benefits of Program Participation

The answers we get from this interview will be combined for our report. Your responses as an individual will be kept confidential. We would like to tape the interview. If at any point during the interview you would like to make off the record statements we will switch off the tape.

1. How do families/people find out about the _____program?

2. How have the services of ____ (program) helped you and your family?

3. If the services were not available at _____(program), would you go somewhere else for them?

4. How are you involved in your children's classroom activities?

5. How are you involved in decision-making about the program's services or activities?

6. Are you encouraged to become volunteers in this program or in other community programs?

7. What services do you find most useful? least useful?

9. What additional services would you like to have available in this neighborhood?

10. What are the most important things you have learned from home visits/parenting classes?

11. How would you describe the relationship between families and the staff?

12. What problems do children, parents or families have with the services? Were these problems resolved? How? Why not?

14. What prevents other families in the community from participating in this program?

15. What suggestions do you have to improve the program?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR PROGRAM STAFF

INTRODUCTION: The purpose of holding this focus group is to gather information that will help us understand the strengths and challenges of implementing a family support and education program. Because you carry out the program you are in the position to best describe what the program does, what are its problems and how the program can be improved. This focus group is an opportunity for you to express your thoughts about your experiences in the program. The information we are gathering will be useful to other states that are involved in similar programs.

During this hour to hour-and-a-half period we plan to cover the following topics:

GOALS
RECRUITMENT
RELATIONSHIPS - FAMILY, SCHOOL, AGENCIES
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
TRAINING AND INFORMATION NEEDS

Do you have any suggestions about other topics we should discuss?

We will be taping the focus group. If at any point you would like to make off the record statements we will switch off the tape. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you tell us, in your own words, what are the goals of your program?

2. How easy or difficult has it been to recruit participants?

   2.1 Who are the hardest to recruit and why?

3. What do you think are the most effective ways of attracting participants to the program?

4. What problems have occurred in implementing your program? How were they resolved?

5. What type of relationship does the staff try to create with families?

6. Did you have any expectations about families that turned out to be different? (Ethnic/cultural factors?)

7. What are some of the difficult situations you have encountered in your relationship with families?

8. How would you describe the program's relations to fathers? (Recruitment and services)

9. Do you think it is a good idea to have health, counseling, adult education, job training and other social services for families offered through the school?

10. Has there been any opposition from within the school or the community at large?

11. The _____ has a number of education, health, family support components. How would you describe the level of teamwork?

12. What are the ways that make it easy to plan and work as a team?

3. What makes it difficult to work as a team?

14. Some of the staff in this program are contracted from other agencies. What kinds of adjustments do they have to make working in this setting?

15. Vice-versa, what adjustments do school staff have to make with staff that come from other agencies?

16. How are staff involved in decision making? planning?

17. Are you performing tasks that are not part of your job description? How do you feel about this?

18. What resources or services to support children and families are lacking or unavailable in this community?

18.1 What obstacles to services exist for children and families?

18.2 What is the _____doing to overcome these obstacles?

19. How effective has _____been in changing the service delivery system?

20. How would you describe the working relationship of _____ with other community agencies and organizations?

21. What are the areas in which relationships with other agencies can be strengthened? How?

22. What kinds of staff development or training activities do you find useful?

23. How would you describe the paperwork demands of your job?

23.1 Does the information you collect about program participants bother them? How?

24. Do you use the information that is collected through current record keeping or data management? For what purpose?

25. What types of information are most useful to carry out your activities?

26. What has been the most rewarding part of your job?

27. Is there anything that we did not cover in our questions that you think is important to mention as far as being a participant in the program?

28. Are there any final questions for us?

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER FOCUS GROUP

1. Can you describe the backgrounds and characteristics of the children in your classrooms?

2. What do you see as the strengths of these children? of their families?

3. What are some of the difficulties you experience as teachers of disadvantaged children?

4. What skills and qualities do you seek to develop among the children in your classes?

5. What kind of relationship do you try to create with families?

6. What are some of the difficult situations you have encountered in you relationship with families?

7. How are parents involved in classroom activities?

8. Are parents expectations of what their children ought to learn in school consistent with your views or are they different? IF DIFFERENT: How do you deal with the situation?

9. What are some difficult issues you have faced when doing home visits?

10. What connections exist between the _____(program) and other programs or activities of your school?

11. How would you describe the working relationship of _____ with other preschool programs in the community?

12. What kind of training is most useful for your work?

13. The _____consists of a number of education, health and family support components. How would you describe the level of teamwork?

14. What are the ways that make it easy to plan and work as a team?

What are the patterns of communication?

15. What makes it difficult to work as a team?

16. How are staff involved in decision making? planning?

17. Are you performing tasks that are not part of your job description? How do you feel about this?

18. What is the most rewarding part of your work?

19. Is there anything that is important about this program that you would like to tell us about?

20. Are there any questions for us?

ATTACHMENT 3

TYPES OF CODED INFORMATION FOR ETHNOGRAPH SOFTWARE

Respondent Information
Community Characteristics
Community Services
Community Services -- other early childhood programs
Program Origins
Goals -- family
Goals -- system of services
Collaboration -- difficulties
Collaboration -- facilitating factors
Collaboration -- lessons
Collaboration -- staffing arrangements
Collaboration -- referrals
Collaboration -- information sharing
Program Impact -- on other agencies
School Role
Parent Involvement
Program Services -- recruitment
Program Services -- transportation/schedules
Program Services -- adult education
Program Services -- health
Program Services -- mental health
Program Services -- home visits
Program Services -- child care and education
Program Services -- special education
Program Services -- infant care
Program Services -- social services
Program Services -- problems
Relationship -- staff and participants
Staffing Issues
Staff Training
Data Management
Evaluation
Funding
State Policy
Education Reform